

Razali, Razlina; Arifin, Muhammad Aiman; Shafie, Latisha Asmaak; Azizan, Farah Lina; Ishak, Mohd Azlan Mohd

Article

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Cogent Business & Management

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Suggested Citation: Razali, Razlina; Arifin, Muhammad Aiman; Shafie, Latisha Asmaak; Azizan, Farah Lina; Ishak, Mohd Azlan Mohd (2024) : Mapping the landscape of talent management research in higher education: a bibliometric analysis, Cogent Business & Management, ISSN 2331-1975, Taylor & Francis, Abingdon, Vol. 11, Iss. 1, pp. 1-16, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2023.2298300>

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/325970>

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To cite this article: Razlina Razali, Muhammad Aiman Arifin, Latisha Asmaak Shafie, Farah Lina Azizan & Mohd Azlan Mohd Ishak (2024) Mapping the landscape of talent management research in higher education: a bibliometric analysis, Cogent Business & Management, 11:1, 2298300, DOI: [10.1080/23311975.2023.2298300](https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2023.2298300)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2023.2298300>



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Mapping the landscape of talent management research in higher education: a bibliometric analysis

Razlina Razali^a, Muhammad Aiman Arifin^b, Latisha Asmaak Shafie^a, Farah Lina Azizan^b and Mohd Azlan Mohd Ishak^c

^aAcademy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Perlis, Arau, Malaysia; ^bFaculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Perlis, Arau, Malaysia; ^cFaculty of Applied Sciences, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Perlis, Arau, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

Research on talent management (TM) in higher education has witnessed a positive development in recent years, following the rising recognition of TM as a key strategy for higher learning institutions to achieve competitive advantage and sustainable performance. However, a comprehensive review of TM using bibliometric analysis that focused on TM research in higher education has not been published. Following this gap, the present study used quantitative bibliometric approaches to statistically and objectively explore research publication patterns of TM in higher education. VoSviewer and Bibliometrix R-package were used to analyse data retrieved from the Scopus database. This analysis involved seven indicators such as highly cited papers, prominent authors, co-authorship patterns among countries, influential journals and countries, thematic mapping, emerging trends, and bibliographic coupling. Results showed that TM in higher education is an evolving topic, with contributions from scholars since 2006. It emerged from this study that topics such as leadership, recruitment, talent attraction, talent development, talent retention, and employee engagement are inherent to TM in higher education. It is important to study the development of TM research in higher education and its characteristics as this type of analysis is still scarce in the literature. The present study contributes to the literature by providing the evolution of this research field as well as helping scholars shape future work in this field.

IMPACT STATEMENT

Our paper presents findings and discussions on the evolution of talent management (TM) research in higher education, elicited using bibliometric approaches. This study is motivated by past scholars and practitioners who have recognized the importance of TM as a key strategy for organizations to achieve a strategic advantage and sustainable performance. This article contributes to the understanding of current developments in TM research in the higher education context. Discussions in this article can facilitate readers in thinking about ways to improve research and practices of TM in higher education, as well as in their respective contexts. Our bibliometric analyses, which have been explained in a straightforward manner, can be adapted by future scholars who are interested in studying the evolution of research studies in their respective areas.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 29 June 2023
Revised 1 December 2023
Accepted 19 December 2023

KEYWORDS

Talent management; higher education; bibliometric analysis; Scopus

REVIEWING EDITOR

Antonio Montero-Navarro, Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, Spain

SUBJECTS

Social Sciences; Economics, Finance, Business & Industry; Business, Management and Accounting; Education; Sustainability Education, Training & Leadership; Higher Education

1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been a growing realization of the importance of talent management (TM) as a key strategy for organizations to achieve competitive advantage and sustainable performance (Anlesinya & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2020; Kaliannan et al., 2023). TM functions as a mechanism to enhance employee and organizational outcomes (Anlesinya et al., 2019). Correspondingly, the concept of TM has been applied in various contexts such as healthcare (Mitosis et al., 2021), manufacturing (Dalal & Akdere, 2023), hospitality and tourism (Kravariti et al., 2022), banking (Jimoh & Kee, 2022), multinational

CONTACT Razlina Razali ✉ razlinarazali@uitm.edu.my 📧 Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Perlis, Arau, Malaysia

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corporation (Hor et al., 2010), small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (Krishnan & Scullion, 2017), and higher education (Gandy et al., 2018).

Notably, the focus on TM in the literature has been quite recent, as indicated by several dedicated publications on the topic starting from 2010 (Sparrow, 2019). The extant TM literature includes discussions on the conceptualizations of TM (Vardi & Collings, 2023), emerging themes in the current labour market (Cappelli & Keller, 2014), the transferability of TM to the public sector (Kravariti & Johnston, 2020), TM at the regional level (Anlesinya et al., 2019) and inclusive TM as a key approach in TM practice (Kaliannan et al., 2023). Several review studies have also been published on topics pertinent to TM for instance, the evolution of TM scholarship (McDonnell et al., 2017), issues related to ways TM is defined, conceptualized, and operationalized (Lewis & Heckman, 2006), theoretical framework for TM (Collings & Mellahi, 2009), theoretical views on talent (Dries, 2013) and new perspectives on TM (Thunnissen et al., 2013).

While TM has gained the attention of scholars and practitioners, review studies that focus on the publication trends in this topic, in particular those from the bibliometric lenses are still lacking. A search conducted by the authors in the Scopus database on August 2, 2023, found only three review studies on TM that utilized bibliometric analysis have been published i.e. Gallardo-Gallardo & Thunnissen (2016), Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2015) and Pagan-Castaño et al. (2022). In addition, to the best of our knowledge, no prior bibliometric studies have focused on TM in the context of higher education. According to Gallardo-Gallardo & Thunnissen (2016), an assessment of the developments in the TM literature so far can shed light on the achievements in the field and at the same time highlight the underexplored areas in TM research. Such studies can contribute to the advancements in the field of TM. In a similar vein, Donthu et al. (2021) maintained that bibliometric studies empower knowledge creation as this approach allows scholars to obtain a comprehensive overview of a topic, identify gaps in knowledge, generate new ideas for future research, and position their intended contributions in a specific field of research.

Given this gap in the literature, our study aims to explore the developments related to TM in higher education up until 2023 using a bibliometric approach. To this end, our study has addressed the following research questions:

- Q1. What are the trends and patterns of development in TM research in higher education?
- Q2. What are the most cited documents, prominent authors, countries, and journals related to TM research in higher education?
- Q3. What are the thematic patterns in TM research in higher education?
- Q4. What are the prospective research areas in TM in higher education?

2. Literature review: talent and talent management in higher education

Talents are a unique and non-imitable human resource that can help higher learning institutions achieve a strategic advantage (Gandy et al., 2018). Institutions are aware that talents are key assets that can enhance innovation and social development, which are crucial for institutional sustainability due to the knowledge, skills, and expertise they possess (Mohammed et al., 2018). Consequently, talent in the context of higher education is often discussed alongside tangible outputs such as research productivity, quality of research, and citation counts (Taamneh et al., 2021; Gandy et al., 2018).

Talent management (TM) can be conceptualized as the systematic process of attracting, identifying, developing, engaging, retaining, and deploying talents that support organizations toward sustainable success (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2020). The term started to gain the attention of practitioners and scholars since its emergence in the *War for Talent* in 1997 by McKinsey and Company (Anlesinya & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2020). In the higher education context, TM is seen as a key enabler for universities to achieve their mission and vision through human resources (Bradley, 2016). Accordingly, TM plays a key role in enhancing university performance which leads to the improvements of ranking (Hazelkorn, 2017; Ramaditya et al., 2022).

While literature on TM in higher education is still far behind compared to other contexts (Mousa & Ayoubi, 2019, Mohammed et al., 2020, Paisey & Paisey, 2018), there is a consensus among scholars on the need for higher education to invest in TM, particularly for their survival in this demanding world (Miirio & Otham, 2018; Mohammed et al., 2018; Ramaditya et al., 2022). Collectively, the literature has outlined several practical implications of TM in higher education:

- **Attracting talented employees.** A strategic talent identification process can ensure the successful identification of potential faculty members who possess the required knowledge and competencies such as in teaching, research, and consultation (Romiani & Farahbakhsh, 2023);
- **Retaining talent.** TM practices that are engaging such as the provision of rewards and opportunities for employee development increase their satisfaction and reduce their likelihood of leaving the job (Matongolo et al., 2018; Saurombe & Barkhuizen, 2022);
- **Improves quality of teaching and research.** TM that is aligned to institutional strategies allows the identification and development of individuals that are important for the successful deliverance of teaching and research activities (Bradley, 2016);
- **Influences institutional brand management.** TM contributes to the quality of output delivered by an institution hence increasing its reputation and ranking (Neri & Wilkins, 2018);

Supports career progression. Talent development which is a component in TM supports the development of knowledge, skills, and competencies of talents that are essential for their career progression (Abiwu & Martins, 2023); and

- **Increases university performance.** Having talented academics who are knowledgeable and competent can help universities attract prospective students and secure grants to support research activities (Mohammed et al., 2018).

To date, several bibliometric analyses have been applied in previous TM review studies. For instance, Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen (2016) used bibliometrics and content analysis to review TM literature sourced from the Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus databases. The same approaches were utilized by Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2015) using data extracted from WoS and Scopus. In a more recent study, Pagan-Castaño et al. (2022) performed a bibliometric analysis of published TM works in the Web of Science database from 2003 to 2022. Despite these studies, none were focused on TM literature published in the context of higher education.

Accordingly, a bibliometric study that analyses the state of the TM literature in higher education is needed to unveil the development of the field so far, while identifying potential areas for exploration. This study contributes to the literature especially related to TM in higher education which has been limited until now as compared to other contexts (Mohammed et al., 2019; Paisey & Paisey, 2018). This study can offer valuable insights to scholars and practitioners in human resource management and higher education to understand the development of TM research in the higher education context. Moreover, this study aims to propose new areas of research related to TM which is contextualized (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2020) within higher education.

3. Methodology

3.1. Bibliometric analysis

The current study employed bibliometric analysis to discover publication trends within the Scopus database with a specific focus on TM in the higher education context. Bibliometric analysis is an innovative, research evaluation methodology that has become popular among researchers in both social and science and technology fields (Ellegaard & Wallin, 2015). It allows the mapping of bibliometric elements from a large amount of scientific data in a quantitative manner (Danvila-del-Valle et al., 2019). Donthu et al. (2021) highlighted that this rigorous method has become increasingly popular in business research. They further explained that the popularity of bibliometric analysis is due to the development, availability, and

ease of use of scientific databases for instance, Scopus and WoS as well as bibliometric software tools such as the VOSviewer.

3.2. Choosing the techniques for analysis

Data in this study were analyzed using the VOSviewer software and Bibliometrix R-package software. VOSviewer is one of the software tools used in bibliometric research for visualizing networks based on several types of analysis such as citation, co-authorship, bibliographic coupling, and co-citation relations (Ahmi, 2021). Compared to other software tools for bibliometric mapping, VOSviewer can view maps that have a considerably large number of items adequately (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010). In this study, we used the VOSviewer software to display the most prominent authors, publications, countries, sources, and documents based on their citation and publication counts. It was also utilized to visualize the international collaborations among authors in relation to the countries of origin of the articles they have authored. Moreover, this software was used for bibliometric coupling to explore the related themes. Meanwhile, Bibliometrix is another tool that can be employed to provide a comprehensive mapping of scientific literature. It is programmed in R to enable flexible integration with other statistical and graphical packages (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). One of the advantages of this software tool compared to VoSviewer is it enables researchers to achieve precise, statistical completeness of the results (Derviş, 2019). In this study, this software tool was used to present the thematic map and trending topics in TM research in higher education based on the keywords used in the articles.

3.3. Data collection

The first stage of the study involved the researchers selecting a database that met the purpose of the study. Common databases used by researchers to retrieve bibliographic data include Google Scholar, Scopus, and WoS. While some researchers combine several databases in their bibliometric analyses, the current study followed the recommendation by Donthu et al. (2021) to use a single database to reduce redundant action items that may contribute to errors on the researchers' part.

For the study, data were extracted as of August 10, 2023, from the Scopus database. The researchers chose Scopus as the database is one of the most distinguished databases globally (Ahmi & Mohamad, 2019). Moreover, the database was purposefully chosen because it indexes a huge amount of quality scholarly work and holds the most integrated coverage of peer-reviewed literature in the fields of sciences, technology, medicine as well as social sciences and arts and humanities (Scopus, 2023). In this study, the researchers did not set a time limit for the data search to capture the evolution of TM research in higher education since the first publication on the topic in Scopus. The data collection procedure is summarized in Table 1.

4. Results

4.1. Sample characteristics

The final sample encompassed 127 articles which were produced by 160 authors from 51 countries. These articles were published across 19 subjects by 98 journals from 2006 to 2023.

Table 1. Search procedure.

Filtering Criteria	Excluded	Included
Database: Scopus		
Date of search: August 10, 2023		
Published from: No time limit		
Language: English only		
Document type: limited to 'articles' only		
Limit to documents with publication stage as 'final'		142
Content screening: Only articles in which the scope of the study (TM in higher education) discussed in 'Titles, Abstracts, and Keywords' are included	15	127

Note(s): This table shows the filtering criteria used to reach the final compilation of 127 articles.

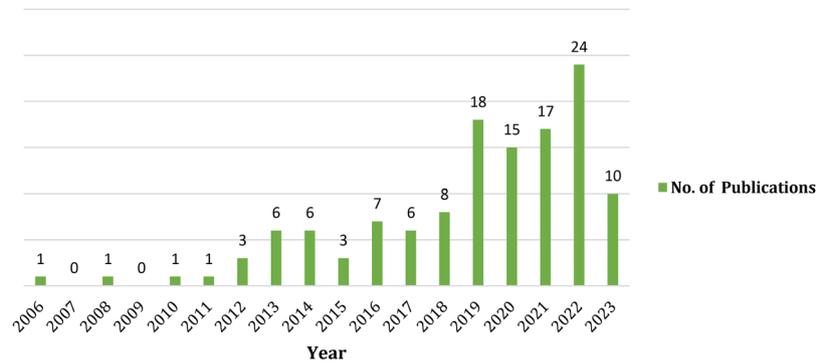


Figure 1. Publication trend of TM research in higher education, 2006–2023.
Source: Authors' conception, based on VoSviewer.

4.2. Performance analysis

4.2.1. Publication trend

The publication trend of TM research in higher education from 2006 to 2023 is shown in Figure 1. Publications in this area experienced slow growth during the first six years with the number of publications being less than five each year. Years 2013 until 2018 indicated research on TM in the higher education context started to catch the attention of more scholars despite a drop in publications in 2015. However, the number of publications increased significantly in 2019 and remained above ten per year since then. Over the years, the year 2022 was found to be the most productive with 24 articles published. Based on the table, it can be projected that the year 2023 may not be as industrious as the previous year in terms of publications, since the number of publications so far is 10 although 2023 has already entered its third quartile.

4.2.2. Top authors and countries of TM research in higher education

Table 2 presents the top ten authors and countries of TM research in higher education that have contributed the most to TM research in higher education. The results are ranked according to publication and citation metrics that are based only on publications on TM in higher education. Among the 160 authors who have published at least one document on this topic, Collings, D.G. from Ireland emerged as the most influential author with 72 citations. This is followed by Thunnissen, M. from the Netherlands with 60 citations and Dries, N. from Belgium with 54 citations. On the other hand, in terms of productivity, Ghani, E.K. from Malaysia led with a total of four articles, followed by Thunnissen, M. and Mousa, M. from Poland, with three articles, respectively. Out of the 51 countries that have a minimum of one document published on this topic, the country that contributed the most is Malaysia with 17 publications. In contrast, the Netherlands is the country that is the most prominent in terms of citation metrics with 333 citations.

4.2.3. Top sources of TM research in higher education

Table 3 lists the most influential sources of TM research in higher education. *Employee Relations (Emerald Publishing)* and *Human Resource Management (Wiley-Blackwell)* journals are the two most notable sources for this topic with 130 and 110 citations, respectively. However, the most prolific sources in terms of production are the *SA Journal of Human Resource Management (Open Journals Publishing AOSIS)* and *International Journal of Human Resource Management (Taylor & Francis)*, with eight and four publications, respectively. It is worth mentioning that while six out of ten journals that publish articles related to TM research in higher education are oriented in Business, Management and Accounting, journals that publish in other subject areas are also accepting articles in this topic. This is a positive indication that multidisciplinary journals are also publishing on this topic, which is important for advancing knowledge.

Table 2. Top authors and countries of TM research in higher education.

R	Author	TP	Institution/Country	Author	TC	Institution/Country	Countries	TP	Countries	TC
1	Ghani, E.K.	4	Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam, Malaysia	Collings, D.G.	72	DCU Business School, Dublin, Ireland	Malaysia	17	Netherlands	333
2	Thunnissen, M.	3	Fontys University of Applied Sciences, Eindhoven, Netherlands	Thunnissen, M.	60	Fontys University of Applied Sciences, Eindhoven, Netherlands	South Africa	16	United Kingdom	221
3	Mousa, M.	3	WSB University, Dabrowa Gornicza, Dabrowa Gornicza, Poland	Dries, N.	54	KU Leuven, 3000 Leuven, Belgium	United States	15	United States	128
4	Mohamed Jais, I.R.	3	Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam, Malaysia	Scullion, H.	52	Hull University Business School, Hull, United Kingdom	United Kingdom	13	South Africa	91
5	Ayoubi, R.M.	3	Coventry University, Coventry, United Kingdom	Paauwe, J.	43	Tilburg University, Tilburg, Netherlands	Iran	10	China	75
6	Abdullahi, M.S.	3	King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia	Mellahi, K.	41	Centre for Responsible Business, Dubai, United Arab Emirates	China	9	Singapore	69
7	Yusof, N.M.	2	Universiti Sains Malaysia, Minden, Malaysia	Gallardo-Gallardo, E.	40	Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, Barcelona, Spain	Australia	5	Ecuador	37
8	Yarmohammadian, M.H.	2	Isfahan University of Medical Sciences, Isfahan, Iran	Barkhuizen, E.N.	36	College of Business and Economics, Johannesburg, South Africa	Indonesia	5	Mexico	34
9	Van Arensbergen, P.	2	Van Hall-Larenstein University of Applied Sciences, Velp, Netherlands	Fruytier, B.	35	Utrecht University of Applied Sciences, Utrecht, Netherlands	Singapore	5	Australia	33
10	Surendran, N.N.	2	Asia Pacific University (APU), Malaysia	Farndale, E.	31	Pennsylvania State University, University Park, United States	Jordan	4	Pakistan	27

Note(s): R: rank; TP: total publications; TC: total citations. Source: Authors' conception, based on VoSviewer.

Table 3. Top sources of TM research in higher education.

R	Journal	TC	TP	Publisher	Subject area
1	Employee Relations	130	1	Emerald Publishing	Business, Management and Accounting
2	Human Resource Management Journal	110	1	Wiley-Blackwell	Business, Management and Accounting
3	International Journal of Human Resource Management	98	4	Taylor & Francis	Business, Management and Accounting
4	Journal of Management Development	54	2	Emerald Publishing	Business, Management and Accounting
5	Personnel Review	54	1	Emerald Publishing	Business, Management and Accounting
6	Higher Education Policy	39	1	Springer Nature	Social Sciences
7	SA Journal of Human Resource Management	37	8	Open Journals Publishing AOSIS	Business, Management and Accounting
8	Future Internet	34	1	Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute (MDPI)	Computer Science
9	Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences	30	2	Mediterranean Center of Social and Educational Research	Social Sciences
10	Journal of the American College of Surgeons	29	1	Lippincott Williams and Wilkins	Medicine

Note(s): R: rank; TP: total publications; TC: total citations. Source: Authors' conception, based on VoSviewer.

4.2.4. Influential articles

The top ten most cited articles with their respective authors, first author's affiliation, source, and citation metrics are presented in Table 4. These articles are ranked based on their total number of citations. Based on our analysis, the article that received the highest citation which is 130 was authored by Thunnissen (2016) with the title, *Talent management: For what, how and how well? An empirical exploration of talent management in practice* in *Employee Relations*. Through an exploratory, longitudinal study in five Dutch university departments, the author investigated how TM was carried out in practice. An interesting finding arising from the study was the incongruities between the theory and practice of TM. This leads to the conclusion that no one shoe fits all when it comes to TM strategy, rather the development and implementation of a TM strategy should be specifically aligned to an organization and its context. The second most influential article is *Talent management in academia: performance systems and HRM policies* by van den Brink et al. (2013). The article was published in *Human Resource Management Journal* and has 110 Scopus citations so far. The article explored the recruitment and selection practices for junior and senior academic talent involving several universities in the Netherlands. According to the study, performance indicators such as H-indexes and citation indices are used in the talent selection stage and the talent recruitment process is influenced by the structural and cultural contexts of academic disciplines.

Table 4. Top articles on TM research in higher education.

R	Document title	Author	Source	First Author Institution/ Country	TC
1	Talent management: For what, how and how well? An empirical exploration of talent management in practice	Thunnissen (2016)	Employee Relations	Fontys University of Applied Sciences, Eindhoven, Netherlands	130
2	Talent management in academia: performance systems and HRM policies	van den Brink et al. (2013)	Human Resource Management Journal	Radboud Universiteit, Nijmegen, Netherlands	110
3	Understanding graduate recruitment, development and retention for the enhancement of talent management: sharpening 'the edge' of graduate talent	McCracken et al. (2016)	The International Journal of Human Resource Management	Ulster University Business School, Coleraine, United Kingdom	56
4	A multi-dimensional approach to talent: An empirical analysis of the definition of talent in Dutch academia	Thunnissen & Van Arensbergen (2015)	Personnel Review	Fontys University of Applied Sciences, Eindhoven, Netherlands	54
5	Determinants of Success in Academic Careers	Van Balen et al. (2012)	Higher Education Policy	QANU (Quality Assurance Netherlands Universities), Utrecht, Netherlands	39
6	Characterization of the Teaching Profile within the Framework of Education 4.0	Ramírez-Montoya et al. (2021)	Future Internet	Tecnológico de Monterrey, Monterrey, Mexico	34
7	Inclusive/exclusive talent management, responsible leadership and organizational downsizing: A study of academics in Egyptian public business schools	Mousa & Ayoubi (2019)	Journal of Management Development	WSB University, Dabrowa Gornicza, Dabrowa Gornicza, Poland	34
8	Overcoming the ethnocentric firm? – foreign fresh university graduate employment in Japan as a new international human resource development method	Conrad & Meyer-Ohle (2019)	The International Journal of Human Resource Management	Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf, Dusseldorf, Germany	31
9	A Review of Trends in Attrition Rates for Surgical Faculty: A Case for a Sustainable Retention Strategy to Cope with Demographic and Economic Realities	Satiani et al. (2013)	Journal of the American College of Surgeons	The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center, Columbus, United States	29
10	Talent management issues for multinational logistics companies in China: observations from the field	Shi & Handfield (2012)	International Journal of Logistics Research and Applications	Shanxi University of Finance and Economics, Taiyuan, China	28

Note(s): R: rank; TC: total citation. Source: Authors' conception, based on VoSviewer.

Further, it is suggested that the HR department play a more significant involvement in the recruitment stage to facilitate a more efficient and robust academic talent management practice in universities.

4.3. Science mapping

4.3.1. Co-authorship relations of TM research in higher education

In this study, we carried out co-authorship analysis to evaluate the collaborative trends of scholars in the field of TM in higher education. Co-authorship network is established when two authors co-authored an article together (Kumar, 2015). The co-authorship relations among authors of different countries are shown in Figure 2. The size of the nodes resembles the number of articles produced by authors in a particular country. We found that out of the 60 countries, 25 countries have an international co-authorship which indicates the existence of a dynamic research collaboration among scholars in this field at an international level (Kumar, 2015). Based on our analysis, the country with the higher co-authorship link with other countries is the United Kingdom (14 countries), followed by Malaysia (9 countries). In addition, we found that six countries which are Egypt, Germany, Iran, Italy, the Netherlands, and South Korea have zero links. This indicates scholars publishing TM research in higher education in those countries have yet to engage in any joint publications at an international level.

4.3.2. Keyword analysis

4.3.2.1. Trending topics and thematic mapping. Keywords are condensed contents that represent the main concepts discussed in a particular article. Keyword analysis can help researchers determine the topical evolution of a particular area of research (Wang & Chai, 2018). Figure 3 shows the emerging topics related to TM in higher education which were harvested from authors' keywords. To perform keyword analysis, we set the minimum frequency at 4, and the yearly word count at 5. It emerged from our analysis that the term 'talent management' was the most trending in 2019. Meanwhile, topics such as 'employee engagement', 'talent attraction', and 'talent development' are still the focus of scholars in this field until today. Moreover, new topics have arisen in 2023 such as 'artificial intelligence', 'analytical hierarchy process', and 'academic employee'.

The most frequently used keywords within TM research in higher education are listed in Table 5. As our study was focused on TM research in higher education and these were used as our search terms, 'talent management' and 'higher education' were undeniably the most frequently used

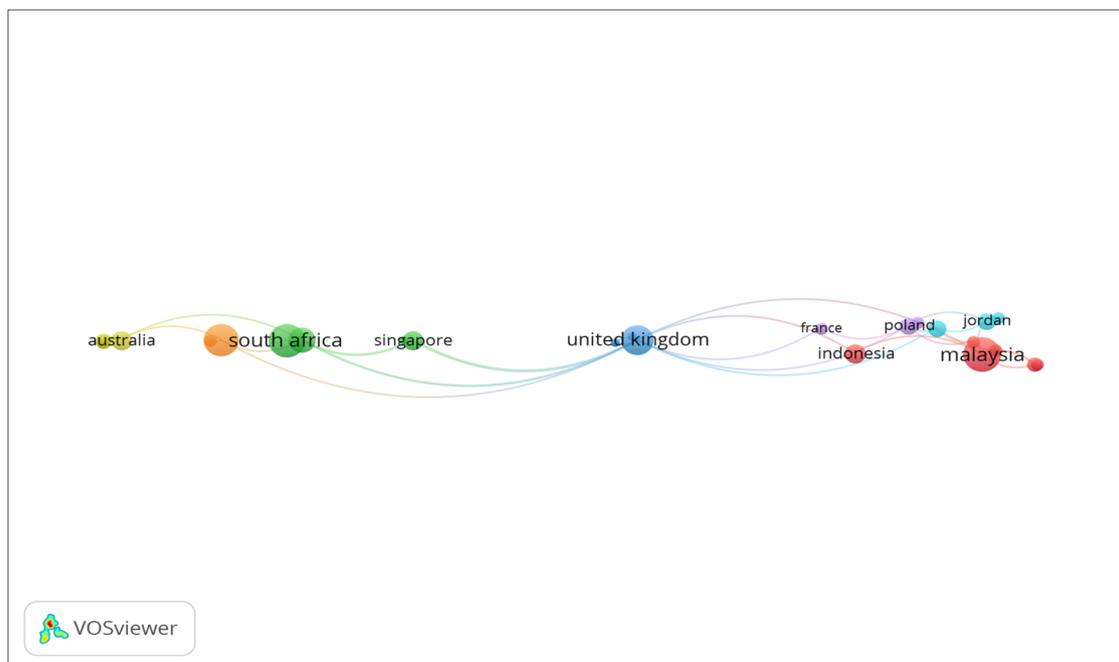


Figure 2. Co-authorship relations based on countries. Visualisation: VoS viewer.

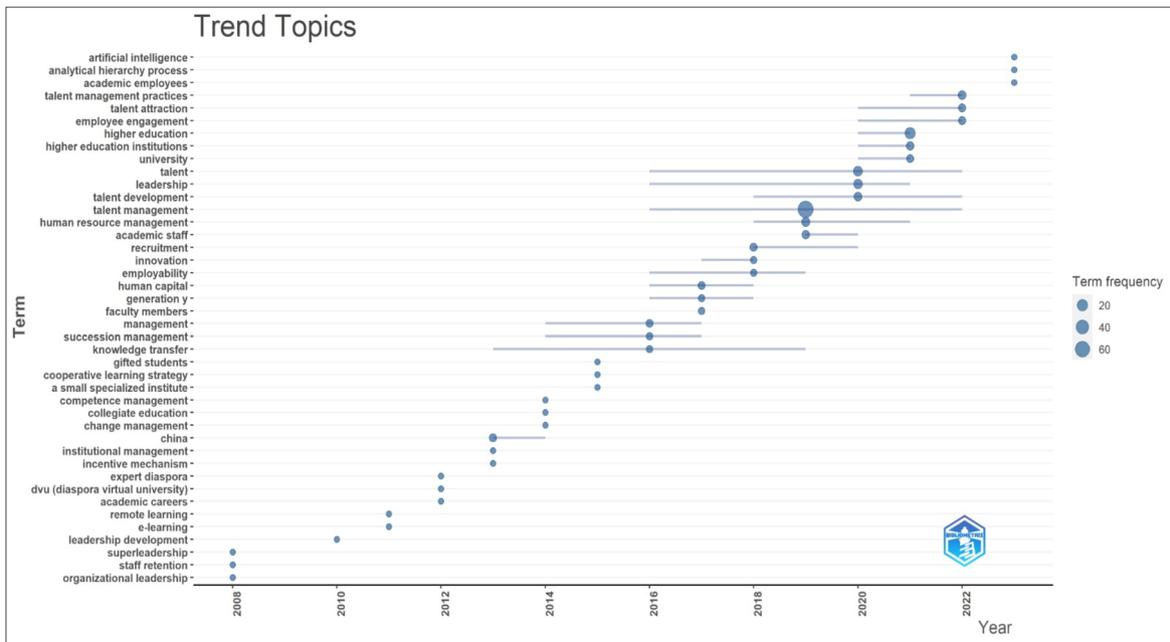


Figure 3. Trending topics with the use of keyword. Visualisation: Bibliometrix.

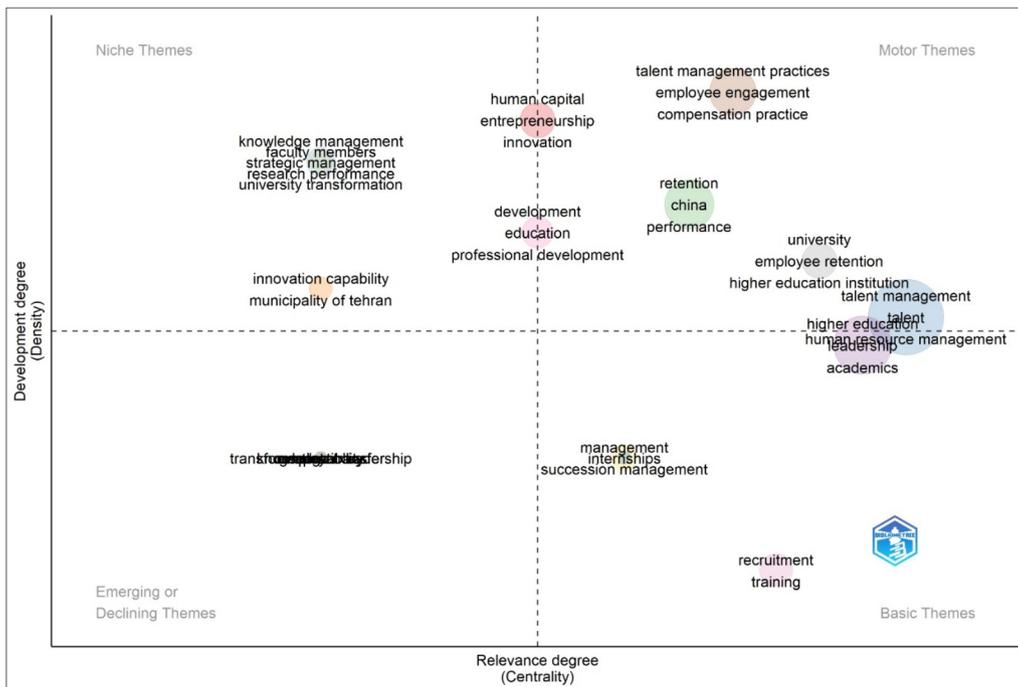


Figure 4. Thematic map. Visualisation: Bibliometrix.

keywords. We found the other dominant keywords were ‘talent’, ‘leadership’, and ‘human resource management’. It is noteworthy to mention that other TM strategies such as ‘talent development’, ‘talent retention’, ‘employee engagement’, ‘recruitment’, and ‘talent attraction’ are also prevalent in existing studies. These keywords represent the concepts that are currently explored by scholars in this field.

We also performed keyword analysis using the Bibliometrix R-package to identify the conceptual structure of TM research in higher education. The results are presented in a thematic map as depicted in Figure 4. The thematic map clusters themes based on their thematic evolution (Cobo et al., 2015). The number of articles that utilized the specific keywords is presented by the size of the circles. This thematic

map is useful for researchers and stakeholders to identify potential areas for future research (Agbo et al., 2021). Following Cobo et al. (2015), the explanation for each quadrant is presented as the following:

1. The themes in the upper-right quadrant present high centrality and high density. They represent the well-developed and significant themes for structuring research on TM in higher education. As shown in Figure 4, 'employee engagement', 'compensation practice', 'retention', 'China', 'performance', 'employee retention', and 'talent' are the dominant topics in this area of study.
2. Themes in the lower-right quadrant are considered the general, fundamental themes in TM in higher education but are not developed. This quadrant consists of themes such as 'management', 'internships', 'succession management', 'recruitment', 'training', 'human resource management', 'leadership', and 'academics'. Therefore, future studies on TM in higher education can focus on these themes to expand the body of knowledge.
3. Themes belonging in the upper-left quadrant reflect the niche themes that have marginal importance to TM in higher education. The themes in this quadrant are 'knowledge management', 'faculty members', 'strategic management', 'research performance', 'university transformation', 'innovation capability', and 'Municipality of Tehran'.
4. Themes placed in the lower-left quadrant are weakly developed and marginal. They are characterized by low density and low centrality and represent themes that are either emerging or disappearing. There are only two themes in this quadrant which are 'competencies' and 'transformational leadership'.

4.3.3. Bibliographic coupling

Bibliometric coupling refers to an instance where two articles refer to a third work that is common. It is a reliable analysis even for emerging fields for research, thus bibliometric coupling is useful to provide insights into the recent developments in a particular field (Bernatović et al., 2022). In this study, we considered documents with a minimum of 5 citations for coupling, which gave a total of 53 documents, among which 30 were connected. This resulted in the revealing of five clusters shown in green, red, purple, blue, and yellow in Figure 5. Then, content analysis was conducted by analyzing each item in these clusters and grouping them under a common theme.

Figure 5 shows related TM research in the higher education context. Cluster 1 (red) includes 11 articles. The most prominent article in this cluster is *Talent management in academia: performance systems and HRM policies* by van den Brink et al. (2012). This cluster revolved around issues on the recruitment and retention of academic and graduate talent (McCracken et al., 2016; van den Brink et al., 2012) as well as the factors that can enhance (Odugbesan et al., 2023) or inhibit effective TM practices in higher education (Gandy et al., 2018). Cluster 2 (green) consists of eight articles with Thunnissen's (2016), *Talent management: For what, how, and how well? An empirical exploration of talent management in practice* being the most important. This cluster mainly focused on empirical studies on TM practices in universities and challenges faced by the higher education sector in managing academic (Mousa et al., 2022; Mousa & Ayoubi, 2019) and student talent (Ananthan et al., 2019; Latukha et al., 2022). Cluster 3 (blue) which consists of six articles discussed TM issues in higher education in African countries. The most cited article in this cluster is *Talent Management, Work Engagement and Service Quality Orientation of Support Staff in*

Table 5. Top keywords.

R	Keyword	TO	R	Keyword	TO
1	Talent Management	71	11	Talent Retention	5
2	Higher Education	20	12	China	4
3	Talent	11	13	Employee Engagement	4
4	Leadership	10	14	Recruitment	4
5	Human Resource Management	7	15	Talent Attraction	4
6	Talent Development	6	16	Training	4
7	Talent Management Practices	6	17	Universities	4
8	Academic Staff	5	18	Academics	3
9	Higher Education Institutions	5	19	Development	3
10	Retention	5	20	Egypt	3

Note(s): R: rank; TO: Total occurrences.

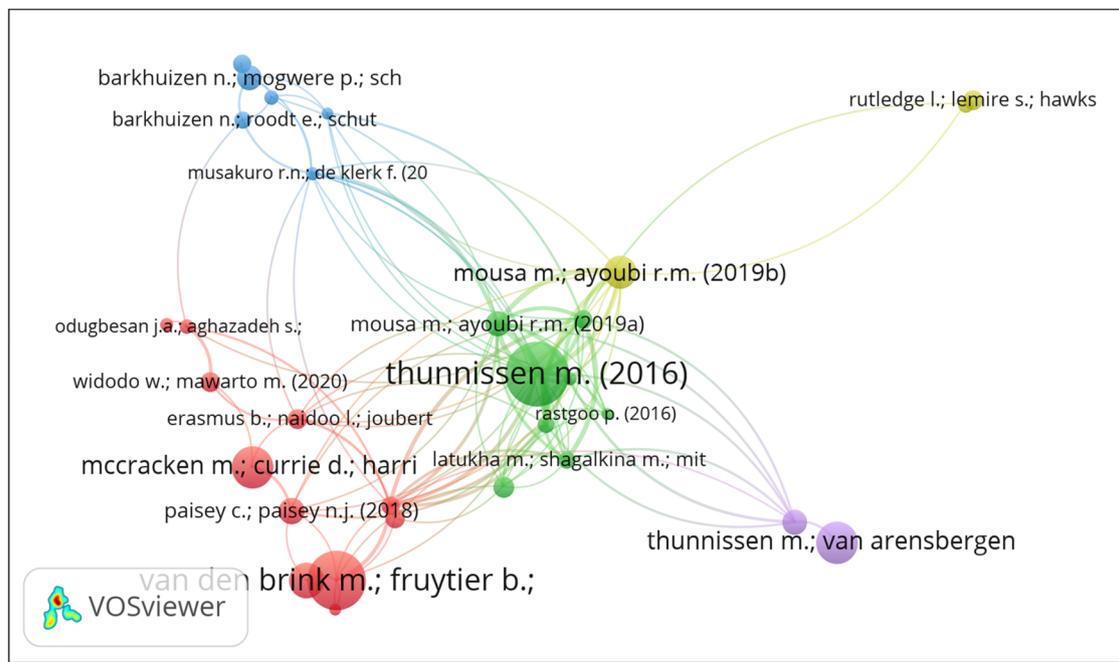


Figure 5. Clusters of TM-related research in higher education through bibliographic coupling. Visualisation: VoS viewer.

a Higher Education Institution by Barkhuizen et al. (2014). The article revealed that TM practices for non-academic staff in higher institutions contributed to better work engagement and service quality. Cluster 4 (yellow) consists of three articles. *Inclusive/exclusive talent management, responsible leadership and organizational downsizing: A study of academics in Egyptian public business schools* by Mousa & Ayoubi (2019) is the most cited article. The article focused on the effect of inclusive/exclusive TM on the organizational downsizing of academic staff and the mediating role of responsible leadership. Finally, Cluster 5 (yellow) includes two articles. The common themes in the two articles were the complexity of TM in higher education and the challenges faced by stakeholders in conducting effective TM practices.

5. Discussions and conclusions

This article contributes to the body of knowledge on TM research by presenting the current state of TM-related research in the higher education context. It has provided a clear and comprehensive coverage of the advances in this topic by analyzing research articles that were indexed in the Scopus database. 126 documents ranging from 2006 to 2023 were analyzed using a bibliometric analysis approach. The article also included a literature review and analyzed research conducted so far on this topic. Although the concept of TM has emerged since the late 1990s and in the higher education sector since 2006, no bibliometric analysis on TM research in higher education has been conducted, and this is the main contribution of this article.

The first mention of TM in higher education in Scopus was that by Wood A. (2006) titled, 'Nurturing Talent'. The article which was published nine years after *The War for Talent* highlighted the need for the chemical and chemical engineering industry to establish linkages with higher education to secure talents for the industry. In its early years, research on this topic gained the attention of only a small number of scholars. However, in recent years, scholarly works pertaining to TM in higher education have shown significant progression. This growth may be attributed to the realization from scholars in the field on the need for TM practices to be strategized according to organization and context (Thunnissen, 2016) to find the 'best-fit' practices (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2015). Correspondingly, it can be argued that TM in higher education is now in its growth stage due to the rise of published works on this topic (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2015) and increased visibility to a larger academic community (von Krogh et al., 2012).

While TM in higher education is researched globally, our study revealed varied attention from scholars. It emerged from our data that non-Western countries are as productive as their Western counterparts in

terms of productivity and influence. In terms of total production, Malaysia is the most prolific country, followed by South Africa and the United States. However, the country with the highest number of citations is the Netherlands, followed by the United Kingdom and the United States. Two papers from the top ten publications in this study have more than 100 Scopus citations, out of a total of 545 citations. A total of 160 authors globally published articles related to TM in higher education, with Collings, D.G. (Ireland), Thunnissen, M. (Netherlands), and Dries, N. (Belgium) possessing the highest citations. In contrast, authors who actively contributed to this topic were Ghani, E.K. (Malaysia), Thunnissen, M. (Netherlands), and Mousa, M. (Poland). With reference to the co-authorship link, the United Kingdom possesses the highest co-authorship link with other countries.

Our analysis of trending topics revealed that in the recent five years (2017-2022), studies on TM in higher education have concentrated on innovation, employability, recruitment, resource management, talent development, leadership, talent attraction, and employee engagement. However, new trends started to emerge in 2023 such as artificial intelligences and analytic hierarchy process. In addition, our analysis also yielded that 'China' is one of the top keywords in this field of research. This can be attributed to China's huge research and development investment in higher education which resulted in a significant increase in China's Scopus publications (Marginson, 2022). Furthermore, the focus on talent management in China can be linked to the country being one of the main investment destinations for foreign multinational companies. This situation requires China to strengthen its talent management practices to secure a good pool of talent that can help these companies achieve global competitiveness (Li et al., 2019).

5.1. Theoretical implications

While several studies that apply bibliometric analysis related to TM have been published (Gallardo-Gallardo & Thunnissen, 2016; Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2015; Pagan-Castaño et al., 2022), the present study contributes to the TM literature by contextualizing it within a specific field, i.e. higher education. This is a response to Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2020) suggestion for framing TM within a specific context – a research area that is limited so far. This contextualization is significant to help researchers understand and identify significant developments in this topic, as well as cognate literature. Our study is the first to apply a bibliometric analysis to investigate TM in higher education literature by presenting the top documents, authors, journals, and key themes that shape the landscape of this topic. Moreover, it has identified potential areas that can guide researchers and human resource management practitioners to conduct future studies on TM in higher education. Three primary areas that can be explored further in future studies are:

1. *TM practices for university graduates.* Such a study can contribute to understanding how countries can secure a talent pool that meets industrial needs and reduce the risks of brain drain (Ananthan et al., 2019; Latukha et al., 2022).
2. *inclusive/exclusive TM practices.* Studies by Mousa et al. (2022) and Mousa & Ayoubi (2019) on this topic can be applied to other higher education institutions to understand the feasibility of either TM practice and the challenges that are associated with a particular TM practice.
3. *TM practice for different stages of academic life.* Given the diversity in higher education such as in terms of age, academic qualification, and research capabilities. Studies that look into how this diversity is managed through TM can provide interesting insights, especially on the motivation and retention of academic talents (Gandy et al., 2018).

5.2. Practical implications

Arising from this study is the need for contextualized TM practice in higher education. This requires an understanding of how TM is contextualized and implemented in the higher education context as well as the role of the actors in this context (Thunnissen & Gallardo-Gallardo, 2017). This is especially true in this current competitive climate that requires higher education institutions to intensify efforts to attract other talents, develop quality graduates i.e. future talent, and increase innovation and knowledge management activities (Hazelkorn, 2017; Ramaditya et al., 2022). Talent management can be a tool for universities to

achieve this competitive advantage (Ramaditya et al., 2022). Therefore, the research of this study is significant to academia, researchers, and practitioners to increase TM practices in academia which has been scarce so far (Mousa et al., 2022).

6. Limitations and future research directions

Despite its contributions, our study is not without any limitations. The main limitation of this study is that analysis was conducted using data retrieved from a single database. Although the Scopus database is one of the prominent databases at present, a bibliometric analysis study that utilizes other databases such as WoS or Google Scholar may yield different results. Future researchers may also consider merging different databases to unveil more robust results on this topic (see Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2015). Second, this study included only articles published in the English language hence contributions from non-English articles are overlooked. While our decision to limit the document type to journal articles can establish the scientific quality of our data, future bibliometric studies that include other document types can provide a more comprehensive coverage of the evolution of literature on TM in higher education. Third, this study consisted of journal articles that included the terms, 'talent management', 'higher education', and 'university' in their title, abstract, and keywords, therefore, other articles relevant to TM research in higher education that utilized different terms might have not been captured in our analysis. Finally, this study did not include in-depth discussions on the conceptualizations and frameworks of TM or TM in higher education given that this study is a quantitative bibliometric. However, results from this study can be generalized and used as a reference for future studies. As such, the clusters, thematic maps, and trending topics elicited from this study open pathways for future investigations.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

About the authors

Razlina Razali is a senior lecturer at the Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA Perlis Branch, Malaysia. Her areas of interests include feedback, talent in higher education, teaching and learning, applied linguistics and bibliometric study.

Muhammad Aiman Arifin is a senior lecturer in the Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Perlis Branch, Malaysia. His research interests include competency development, talent management, instrument development, HR policies and bibliometric study.

Latisha Asmaak Shafie is an associate professor at Universiti Teknologi MARA Perlis Branch, Malaysia. Her research areas are digital discourse, identities, social media studies, autoethnography, informal learning, and Alassisted learning and teaching.

Farah Lina Azizan is a senior lecturer in the Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Perlis Branch, Malaysia. Her areas of expertise are marketing management, leadership and organizational communication.

Mohd Azlan Mohd Ishak is a professor in the Faculty of Applied Sciences, Universiti Teknologi MARA Perlis Branch, Malaysia. His research areas include coal liquefaction and pyrolysis, energy and green chemistry, supercritical extraction, activated materials and coal and biomass blends.

Funding

This work was funded under the Geran Penyelidikan Lelasan PhD (LPhD) [Grant number: 600-RMC/GPM LPHD 5/3 (168/2021)].

Data availability statement

The original dataset from which the results of this article were analysed and delineated are available on Scopus.com.

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